

B. Geo. Washington Ranck.

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[Simon] Girty, the
White Indian.

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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY.

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GIRTY

The White Indian

INDIA'S HISTORICAL SURVEY

Girty, the white Indian

George W. Ranck

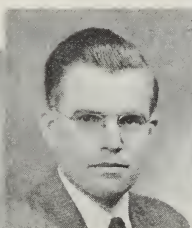
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FOREWORD

Simon Girty, known as "the Great Renegade," was despised and hated by the frontier settlers in the Old Northwest during and after the Revolutionary War. His conduct was characterized by savage malignity and atrocious acts of cruelty toward the white race.

The following account originally appeared in the MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY, volume XV, March, 1886. George W. Ranck signed the article.

The Boards and the Staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County reprint the article verbatim in the hope that it will be interesting and informative to Library patrons.

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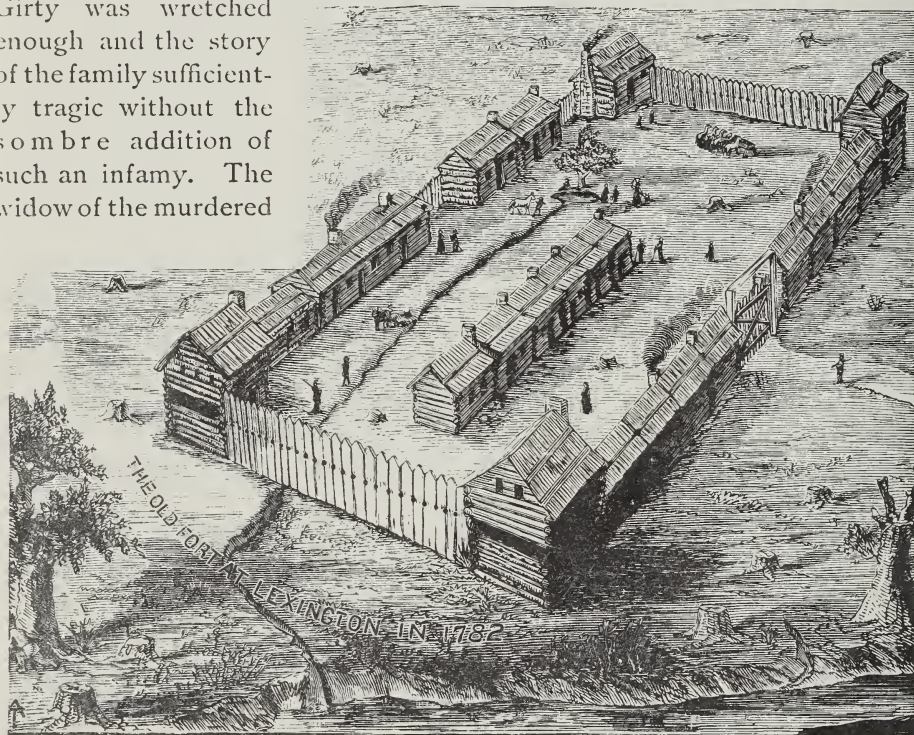
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Though Simon Girty was one of the most unique and lurid characters that ever figured in the annals of the West ; though the part he played among the Indian tribes was frequently important and sometimes conspicuous, and though his life was a tragic romance from the cradle to the grave, yet all that was known of him for more than a hundred years from the time that he first made himself feared and hated was comprised in a few widely scattered fragments written entirely by his enemies and disfigured by errors and inconsistencies. Probably no minor personage in American history who has received as little attention as Girty has had more written of him in ignorance or been the subject of so many wild and conflicting statements. Even as late as 1883, a book, with an indorsing preface by a distinguished historian, was published, which gave as facts the fairy tales about Girty which, strange to say, have been accepted as authentic down to the present time. These very circumstances made the life of Girty attractive to the writer as an historical study, and interested him in an effort to draw out and straighten the thread of truth that has so long been knotted in this tangled skein.

The eventful story of the White Indian, which is here attempted for the first time, is mainly drawn from original sources, and needs neither the intense colorings of prejudice nor the embellishments of fancy to make it entertaining.

Simon Girty was born in 1744 at the then little backwoods settlement of Paxton, in the colony of Pennsylvania, and not far from the site of the present city of Harrisburg. His father, "old Girty of Paxtang," as he was irreverently called, a lawless, intemperate Irishman, immigrated to the colony about the year 1740, adopted the congenial pursuit of pack-horse driver in the Indian trade, married one Mary Newton, and made his home for a number of years at "Paxtang." Finding it profitable to exchange red paint, glass beads and bad whiskey for valuable furs and skins, he became a trader himself and fell into the clutches of the law as an unlicensed trafficker, and later on, in 1750, got himself into the same predicament again for appropriating certain unpurchased Indian lands on Sherman Creek, in the present Perry County, Pennsylvania. This last venture did not in-

crease his popularity with the red men, and shortly after it he was killed by an Indian named "The Fish" near his home on the Susquehanna, and not far from the land he had attempted to borrow. There is no doubt that "old Girty of Paxtang" was more of a sot than a saint, and that fact certainly did not increase his wife's affection for him, but the dramatic episode of her fall, and the assertion oft-repeated and now so ancient that her husband was slain by her paramour turns out to be a pure fabrication. Surely the life of Mary Girty was wretched enough and the story of the family sufficiently tragic without the sombre addition of such an infamy. The widow of the murdered



LEXINGTON A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

man was left to battle with poverty and privations, and her four little sons, Simon, James, George and Thomas, looked helplessly out upon an unfriendly world with no inheritance but a love of liquor, with no memories but bitter ones, and with a future overshadowed by a relentless fate.

About the year 1755, just in time to share the sufferings and horrors of the French and Indian war, the widow Girty married John Turner, who was then living on the Juniata, not far from the protecting walls of Fort Granville, near the present Lewistown, and there at his rude cabin and

clearing, for a brief season, did the unfortunate family have such scant happiness as the war and a howling wilderness afforded. But more misery was impending. In the summer of 1756, not a year and a half after Mrs. Turner's marriage, and while she was rejoicing in the smiles and dimples of an infant son, the danger signal was suddenly heard and the family barely had time to rush into Fort Granville when it was attacked by a large number of French and Indians, who had evidently heard of the absence of the commandant of the fort, who had left it with all his men but a handful under Lieutenant Armstrong to guard some reapers in Sherman's valley. The fort was fired, Armstrong and one man had been killed, several others wounded and destruction was imminent, when the enemy offered quarter to the besieged if they would surrender, and John Turner, too desperate to wait for a formal acceptance of the offer, threw open the gates. Savage mercy followed. The fort was given up to the flames and the prisoners, already worn out, were driven by forced marches to Kittanning, an Indian town on the Alleghany, where Mary Newton became a widow for a second time and the climax of her sufferings was reached. The whole village turned out with whoops and yells of rejoicing to meet the victors, and the few grown male prisoners who had not already been tomahawked were summarily disposed of. John Turner was consigned to the stake before the eyes of his agonized family, and the carousing savages amused themselves by boring holes through his flesh with red-hot gun-barrels. Finally, when flames and torture had nearly done their work, the dying man was tomahawked by a little Indian boy who was lifted up in the arms of his admiring father for the purpose. If we will just here recall the fact that the Christian government of Pennsylvania was at this very date offering rewards in cash for the scalps of Indian men, women and children, we may form some idea of the spirit which prevailed during this desperate and vengeful struggle.

During this festive halt at Kittanning the surviving captives were parceled out among the representatives of the different tribes engaged in the expedition. Thomas and George Girty were assigned to the Delawares; Simon to the Senecas, and James Girty, his mother and her infant son John Turner were delivered over to the Shawanese. On the 8th of the following September, when Colonel Armstrong attacked and destroyed Kittanning, he recaptured Thomas Girty, who thus escaped the savage education in store for his brothers. He found a home near Fort Pitt, the site of the present Pittsburgh, where he resided ever after, and gave his name to Girty's Run in the same neighborhood. The fate of his singularly unfortunate mother has given rise to many romantic but conflicting tradi-

tions, and is still involved in obscurity. There is nothing to show that she ever escaped from the clutches of the dusky demons who must have seemed to her as special agents to work out the family doom. Her baby, the little John Turner, to whom she clung so frantically through many a heartrending scene, remained for years among the slayers of his father; but though longer in captivity than any of his family, he seems to have been the least affected by savage life, and, strange to say, when at last released he sought out his brother Thomas and lived with the whites to the end of his days.

Unheard of for years, the other captive brothers roamed, with their adopted tribes, the great North-western wilderness, and day by day their savage guardians sought to destroy within them every feeling and instinct of race and civilization. The Girty blood was naturally wild and lawless, and they succeeded only too well. In 1764, at the close of Pontiac's war, the able and gallant Bouquet of the British army accomplished that wholesale rescue of prisoners from the Indians so eloquently portrayed in the noted painting of Benjamin West, and the three Girty brothers were among the number. But they had now become indifferent to deliverance. They returned with Bouquet to Fort Pitt, but they returned with souls imbued with savage feelings and with natures perverted by savage education. They had been taught to love the destroyers of their parents, and charmed with the wild, free life of the forest and the prairie, they hated to their dying day the restraints and artificial habits of white society. It is even said that they returned to their tribes, but that the Indians were again compelled to give them up. They were for a time apparently weaned away from their adopted brethren, but they never even then fought against them, were always at ease in their company, and, as will be seen later on, ultimately took up the savage life again. Much of their time after their rescue was spent about Fort Pitt, and the then wild and wooded locality in that vicinity, which later received the name of Squirrel Hill, seems to have been one of their favorite haunts. It was there that their more fortunate brother Thomas and their long absent half-brother John Turner settled, and the early history of the hill teems with highly entertaining but confused and unreliable legends of the family.

The three white savages followed in a desultory way the pursuits which harmonized most with their restless and unsettled dispositions. James and George pursued for a while their father's old business of trading with the Indians, while Simon made a reputation as scout and interpreter. It was in this last capacity that he descended the Ohio with Lord Dunmore in 1774, during the Cresap war, and assisted the Governor at the treaty in-

terview at Camp Charlotte with that great-souled and magnificent Indian, Cornstalk, a fact which contradicts the wonderful and too thrilling story of his rage and treachery just before the battle of Point Pleasant. It was while he was with Dunmore that he became the friend and comrade of Simon Kenton, and made the acquaintance of Boone, Clark, Harrod and others who took part in the expedition and afterward figured in early Kentucky history. It was about this time, while the glowing spark of the American Revolution was being blindly fanned into a blaze, that Simon Girty fell under the malign influence of Conally, the Tory commandant of Fort Pitt, who finally brought down upon the unfortunate man the crowning curse of his already perverted life. The wily and talented commandant, deep in his plot to secure the Indians to the English, sweep the frontier settlements from existence, and decide the fortunes of the West in favor of the crown, was corrupting every man corruptible about the fort. Alexander McKee and Matthew Elliott, both of whom were destined to achieve an infamous notoriety, had not only themselves succumbed already to the power of British gold but were busy helping to seduce Girty also, and it is probable that the lieutenant's commission in the Virginia militia which was given him by Conally only a few weeks before the battle of Lexington, was presented with a view to secure him as a henchman. But the plot was discovered, Conally was arrested, the militia reorganized, and the tempted Girty relegated to his former and less brilliant position of interpreter. He was employed in that capacity during the most of 1776 by the Indian agent Colonel George Morgan, but he was restless and dissatisfied, and his conduct was such that he was discharged by his employer, "for ill behavior," in August of that year. It has been asserted by various authors that Girty was busy this year—1776—assisting the Indians against the Americans, and Abbott and Perkins both make him the leader of the savage attack on Fort Henry in the fall of 1777, when the Elizabeth Zane incident is said to have occurred, but both statements, though elaborated in a highly entertaining way, are utterly without foundation. He was still at Fort Pitt at the times mentioned, but in no very amiable mood. Corrupted by Conally, disappointed in his military hopes, sore over his discharge, and too much of an Indian to be moved by the feelings and principles then stirring the patriotic garrison, but little was needed to induce him to cast his lot with the people of his adoption and their powerful employers.

Early in 1778, while the American General Hand was commanding at Fort Pitt, where Girty was once more acting as interpreter, it became plainly evident to all its inmates that the fiercest of the North-western tribes had united against the Americans and that the whole frontier would be in-

volved in savage warfare. All the Indian in Girty impelled him to side with the dusky companions of his forest life, and when at this dangerous crisis he was again approached with specious arguments and seductive promises by Elliot and McKee, who had been for months in the secret pay of the British commander at Detroit, the untaught creature, with the face of a white man and the heart of an Indian, and with no feeling of loyalty to any flag either English or American, threw in his lot with the savages and their allies. On the night of the 28th of March, 1778, three or four years later than some writers claim, this now notorious trio together with seven soldiers fled from the long familiar walls of Fort Pitt and severed their connection with their country forever. The date of their departure and the attendant circumstances are established beyond question by the official records of Major Isaac Craig, now in the hands of his grandson the accurate and accomplished Isaac Craig, Esq., of Alleghany, Pennsylvania. Major Craig, in command of artillery, was ordered to Fort Pitt during the Revolution and remained there until the close of the war. Girty soon put in an appearance at Detroit, where he was warmly welcomed by the English commandant Hamilton, whom that great soldier, Clarke, stigmatized as "the hair-buyer general." Girty's skill as a woodsman and scout, his knowledge of the Indian languages, his proficiency in all the savage arts, but above all his influence with his dusky kinsmen, made him exceedingly valuable to the English, who needed his services in advancing their interests among the North-western tribes. A few weeks before Simon's flight his brother James had been sent from Fort Pitt with presents and mollifying messages to the Shawnees, who were boiling over with righteous wrath at the cowardly murder of Cornstalk and his son. He heard the news of Simon's flight while on this mission, renewed at once his kinship with his ancient tribe and returned to Fort Pitt no more. The following year his brother George, the only one of the three regularly enlisted in the Continental army, renewed for life his connection with the people of his choice. Simon, or "Katepacomen," as the Indians called him, now allied himself with the Wyandots, "the bravest of the tribes," with whom he was more or less identified until the day of his death. They had known him ever since his childhood, and they received him now as an adopted Indian, and he soon became one of their most trusted and efficient leaders, a fact which of itself did no little toward making his voice so potent in the councils of the North-western tribes. Much of his time during the Revolution was spent within the present boundary of the State of Ohio, his favorite haunt being the Wyandotte town of Upper Sandusky, which was located about four miles north-east of the Upper Sandusky of to-day. Here the British paid



...fled from the walls of Fort Pitt

their savage allies of the West their annuities, and here Girty helped to plan and direct many of the blows that were aimed at the frontier settlements.

It was while Girty was in the Ohio country, and in the fall of the same year that he fled from Fort Pitt, that the most creditable act of his life took place. The Indians who were then constantly on the war-path brought home many captives, and among them the redoubtable Simon Kenton, whom they had taken to Wapakoneta and had already doomed to the stake, when he was recognized by Girty with astonishment and delight as his old comrade of the Dunmore expedition. At once and at the risk of destroying both his standing and influence among his inflamed and suspicious people, Girty exerted himself to the utmost to save him, and at length, after the most earnest and impassioned speeches, the power of which is attested by the effect it had upon a crowded council of prejudiced and revengeful savages, he succeeded, and taking the rejoicing Kenton to his own cabin, he fed him, clothed him and dressed his neglected wounds. White Indian as he was and renegade, if such he can strictly be called, he exhibited on this occasion at least a generosity and nobility of soul which would have done credit to a more enlightened and more civilized character. The British, however, soon made use of him to perpetrate acts the very reverse of this one, and not very long after the Kenton incident he made his first appearance in the character of an emissary among the Moravian Indians with his evil advisers Elliott and McKee, and with them sought to instigate that peaceful community to join in the war against the Americans. He is first heard of in a military capacity in January, 1779, when as the leader of a band of savages he attacked and defeated a party of Continental soldiers under Captain John Clarke not far from his old familiar haunt, Fort Pitt. The following summer, when Colonel Bowman was engaged in his attack on old Chillicothe, Girty was back in Ohio, and the report that he was advancing with a hundred warriors to the relief of that place may have had something to do with Bowman's strange and sudden order for the retreat of the expedition.

The Girty brothers accompanied Colonel Byrd when he invaded Kentucky in 1780, and it was when the force was returning to the Indian country that one of its detachments, commanded, it is alleged, by Simon Girty, defeated Colonel David Rogers at the mouth of the Licking as he was conveying a load of ammunition up the Ohio for the Americans at Fort Pitt. This victory, though not remarkable for the number of men concerned, was one of the most complete and crushing of the minor engagements of the struggle, and must have convinced the Indians that their white brother

was a brave of more than ordinary military capacity, for when Clarke retaliated on the Pickaway towns immediately after Byrd's unexplained retreat Girty was given no insignificant part in the conflict, though it is claimed that on one occasion the reckless bravery of the Kentuckians caused him to draw off his savages with the remark that "it was useless to fight fools and madmen." George Girty, the only one of the Girty brothers who, contrary to the popular impression, ever actually deserted from the American army, was duly heard from in the summer of 1781. General Irvine, then in command of Fort Pitt, records the fact that a band of Indians under this loyal savage and the noted Brandt attacked on the 24th of August and below the mouth of the Great Miami a force of volunteers on their way to join Clarke, and killed or captured every man in the expedition.

Both the date and the facts of the second demonstration against Fort Henry, which occurred very early in September, 1781, have been badly mixed by different writers, but it is quite evident that the Girtys participated in the siege, which failed through timely notice given the settlers by the Moravian missionaries—a fact which caused the disappointed Wyandots to turn 'round upon the buffeted and badgered Christian Indians, located about the site of the present Coshocton on the Muskingum, and break up their settlements. Girty took part in the brutality of his tribe, and though according to Heckewelder, a most authentic witness, "Elliott was the principal instigator of their sufferings," Girty also made himself conspicuous as a raging persecutor of the missionaries and their unresisting converts. His outrageous conduct at this time is attributed to drink—an overwhelming inherited passion. "No Indian we ever saw drunk," says Heckewelder, "would have been a match for him." But at this stage of the game in the West there was but little choice between the mercy of an Indian and the compassion of a white man, and deeds of cruelty were not confined to one side only. The spring of 1782, the last year of the Revolution, had barely come when Captain David Williamson and a party of American frontiersmen, as if bent upon surpassing the inhumanity of Girty and the Wyandots, also pounced down upon the defenceless Moravian Indians and murdered in the most cowardly and cold-blooded manner about a hundred of their men, women and children. The victims were deliberately slaughtered like so many unresisting cattle, their bodies burned in one of their own churches, and their property carried off to the settlements. It was a deed as infamous as any ever committed by the fanatical Sepoy or "the unutterable Turk," and was doubly atrocious from the fact that the murdered people had befriended the Americans. The Indians,

though they felt free themselves to worry and abuse this little band of their own people, resented this massacre as a deadly insult and outrage upon their whole race. They never forgot it, they never forgave it, and there was no mercy in store for any man who had part or lot in the matter. Howe, in his *Historical Collections*, says that even as late as eight years after the affair a settler captured near Wheeling was killed by the Indians for having been concerned in that awful crime. About the same time that Williamson murdered the Moravians occurred the celebrated defeat of Estill by the Wyandots, two events that aroused the worst passions of both sides to the highest pitch. The settlers proceeded at once to organize the ill-fated expedition of Crawford, with the declared intention of exterminating the Wyandots and Delawares of the Sandusky root and branch. No quarter was to be asked or given, no prisoners were to be taken, every Indian, be he friend or foe, was to die. The savages heard of this determination and met it with a resolution as merciless as it was inflexible. The tragic story of the Crawford expedition is well known. In June, 1782, with the murderer Williamson second in command and accompanied by a number of others who had participated in the Moravian massacre, he marched upon the Sandusky towns, failed disastrously, and fell with many of his troops into the hands of the Indians, whose hearts were burning with ferocity and the thirst for vengeance. The guilty Williamson, who so well merited death, unfortunately escaped, but Crawford was doomed. He was burned at the stake, on the 11th of June, near Upper Sandusky, in the present Wyandot County, Ohio, after prolonged and horrible sufferings from all the tortures that savage ingenuity could invent. Simon Girty, who had been a prominent leader in the conflict, and who witnessed this terrible scene, had known Crawford during the Dunmore war; had often enjoyed his hospitality, and, tradition says, had even formed a romantic attachment for his daughter. It is therefore easy to believe that the blackest thing that has ever been alleged against him is that he not only did not save the tortured and slowly-dying colonel, but answered him with a mocking laugh when he begged him to shoot him and relieve him of his agony. It is said that even the devil is not as black as he is painted, and it is possible that the same may be said of Girty. Exactly how far his savage and perverted nature carried him on this occasion will never probably be accurately known, but the commonest principles of justice require that some things that are known should be stated. It should be remembered right at the beginning that Crawford was a prisoner of the Delawares, and that they only could therefore decide his fate; and that he was burnt at a Delaware town and in retaliation for an outrage upon Delawares, for



.. answered him with a mocking laugh ..

the Moravians were of that tribe. The statement printed time and again that the ill-fated colonel was burnt by Girty's tribe, the Wyandots, betrays a gross ignorance, both of the transaction itself, and of the customs peculiar to the different tribes of that day. The writer was not surprised therefore that a Canadian descendant of Wyandot Indians, with whom he corresponded, should energetically protest that his ancestral tribe did not at that time, if ever, burn prisoners of war. Regarded simply from a tribal stand-point, Girty had no authority whatever to release Crawford. As to the influence which he might have exerted in favor of the condemned man, that is another matter, for he was certainly a person of no little power and importance among the Indians at that time. Dr. Knight, who was captured with Crawford and witnessed his tortures, and who has long been accepted as a most reliable authority on this subject, while he says that Girty refused the prayer of the tortured man to shoot him and "by all his gestures seemed delighted at the horrid scene," does not make him in any way an assistant at it. On the contrary, he even asserts that Crawford said to him: "Girty has promised to do all in his power for me, but the Indians are very much inflamed against us." An examination of the principal authorities on this subject will convince any unprejudiced person that Girty was true to his promise to Crawford, but that he was utterly powerless to save him. Heckewelder, who certainly had not one spark of love for Girty, and whose testimony is unimpeachable, says of Crawford: "It was not in the power of any man, or even body of men, to save his life." Wingemund, a Delaware chief, when appealed to by Crawford, replied: "If Williamson had been taken you might have been saved, but, as it is, no man would dare to interfere in your behalf; the King of England, if he were to come in person, could not save you; we have to learn barbarities from you white people." (See Howe, 547.) If the statements of the savage but brave and manly Wyandots are to be believed, Girty did not forget the sacred obligations of accepted hospitality, but remembered old ties in Crawford's case as he did in Kenton's. McCutchen, who claims to have obtained his information from Wyandots, says, in the *American Pioneer*, that Girty tried to save Crawford at the only time when it was possible to do it, viz., the night before his capture. That he went to him in Indian dress, and, under a flag of truce, warned him that he would be surrounded that night, and told him how he might escape; that Crawford tried to act on his advice, but that his men were too much demoralized to carry out the plan. After saying this, McCutcheon strangely adds that afterward, as a matter of speculation, Girty offered the Delaware war-chief, Pipe, three hundred and fifty dollars for Crawford, but was himself

threatened with the stake for his interference ; that he was afraid after that to show the sympathy he felt for the doomed man, but sent runners, however, to Lower Sandusky, to traders there, to hasten to buy Crawford, but that he was fatally burned by the time they arrived. The latest contribution to this subject is from the venerable Mrs. McCormick, of Pelee Island, now in her ninety-sixth year, and it is doubly interesting from the fact that she was not only personally acquainted with Simon Girty, but received her information directly from her mother-in-law, who was captured by the Ohio Indians when she was about grown, and was at the Delaware town when Crawford was burnt. Mrs. McCormick kindly sent the writer the following statement, often repeated to her by her mother-in-law, in recounting the incidents of her captivity. She says: "I have often heard my mother-in-law speak of Simon Girty. She both saw and heard him interceding with the Indian chief for the life of Colonel Crawford, and he offered the chief a beautiful horse which he had with him, and the stock of goods he then had on hand, if he would release him, but the chief said 'No! If you were to stand in his place it would not save him.' She also went to see Colonel Crawford, and talked with him, and he told her that Girty had done all he could to save his life." This was no Kenton case. Crawford had invaded the Indian country with the declared intention of granting no quarter, and, what was even worse in the eyes of the infuriated savages, his intimate associate and right-hand man was the guilty Williamson. Crawford was burnt by the Delawares in retaliation for the wanton and cowardly massacre of their Moravian kindred, and there was no hope for him from the moment of his capture. Authorities differ as to the motives which actuated Girty's conduct toward Crawford, but close inquiry renders positive the declaration that Girty was not only powerless to save him, but that he would have endangered his own life if he had persisted in an open effort to do so.

It was during the days immediately following Crawford's defeat that James and George Girty so greatly increased their unsavory reputations by their brutal treatment of Slover and other captives, and more than one writer expresses the opinion that much of the odium now resting upon Simon Girty is due to the fact that many of the cruel acts of these brothers were either ignorantly or intentionally placed to his credit. The power of circumstances and education to affect the lives and conduct of men is here strikingly exemplified. Thomas Girty, reared among patriotic and civilizing influences, was now one of the respected and substantial citizens of Pittsburgh (Fort Pitt), and at the very time his three Indian brothers were joining in the war-whoop of the braves as they gathered for the destruc-

tion of Crawford's command, he was known as a lover of his country and was seeking to increase the security and good order of his town.

Elated by their victory over Crawford and spurred on by rumors of a peace which would leave the choicest of their hunting-grounds forever in the possession of their enemies, the Indians were eager to make a crowning effort for the recovery of Kentucky, and early in August of this year, 1782, a grand council of the North-western tribes was held at Chillicothe to decide the question of invasion. Simon Girty, who was now one of the most trusted and devoted of the Indian leaders, was the foremost figure at this meeting, and is credited by Bradford with having made the decisive speech of the occasion. Nearly six feet tall, straight, strong and broad-chested, with massive head and big black eyes, deeply bronzed by exposure, dressed in savage fashion and adorned with paint, feathers, and all the war trappings of his tribe, he looked every inch the Indian leader that circumstances and his peculiar talents had made him. To the assembled chiefs his words were the words of Katepacomen, their adopted brother, who was as faithful to them as the panther to her cubs; whose tent-poles had been strung with the scalps of their enemies, whose cunning was that of the fox and whose heart had never failed him in time of battle. In his speech, which aroused the warriors to the highest pitch of excitement, he depicted the ruin the whites were making of their favorite hunting-ground, urged an immediate blow for its recovery, and then with significant flourishes of his tomahawk he closed his impassioned words by a fiery call for the extermination of their enemies, which was answered by a wild and unanimous yell of approval. The council promptly declared for invasion. Girty was chosen the leader of the savage army of nearly six hundred warriors, and Bryant's and Lexington stations, which were only five miles apart, were marked as the first in order of destruction. By the middle of the month the dusky horde, after a swift and stealthy march, reached the center of the wilderness now so widely known as "the Blue Grass Region of Kentucky," and on the night of the 14th of August silently settled around famous Bryant's Station, which they had expected would fall at once into their hands through the absence of its usual male defenders. With admirable skill the wily Girty had maneuvered to draw them out to the relief of Hoy's Station, which he had caused to be threatened several days before for that very purpose, and the pioneers, completely deceived by the device, were busy with preparations for a march by sunrise, when he arrived fortunately for them a few hours before their intended departure. The deceiver was himself deceived. Mistaking the bustle and the lights within the fort to mean that his presence had been discovered, Girty ordered a premature at-



..with significant flourishes of his tomahawk..

tack, which revealed to the unsuspecting and astounded garrison the imminence of its danger and ultimately resulted in the failure of its enemies. The gallant charge of the men of Lexington through the Indian lines and into the beleaguered fort; the heroic exploit of the women who marched into the jaws of death to get water for the garrison, and the successful defense of Bryant's Station are now too celebrated in story and in song to need another telling. At this siege Girty displayed his usual courage. He led on the Indians when they stormed the palisades, and in a close encounter with a Lexington rifleman barely escaped with his life. His parley with the garrison, however, when he tried to negotiate a surrender, resulted only in his mortification and the taunt of the fearless Reynolds that "they knew him, and he himself had a worthless dog that looked so much like him that he called him Simon Girty," must have convinced the White Indian how greatly he was detested by the pioneers. The alarm had now gone forth, the rescue was sounded and the siege was abandoned. Girty's plan, so admirably conceived, so well conducted and so nearly realized, failed, but in the very face of defeat and while the brave hunters of Kentucky were gathering and marching against him, beset by difficulties but undiscouraged, he formed a scheme still deeper and more dangerous to his foes. He retreated, but it was a subtle and seductive retreat, which lured the small but dauntless band of his pursuers to the fatal hills and deadly ravines of the Blue Licks, where the advice of the sagacious Boone was disregarded, and where, on the 19th of August, 1782, the Indians struck a blow that sent horror and grief to every cabin in the wilderness of Kentucky and invested the name of a barren and rugged spot of earth with a sad and sanguinary immortality. The criminal rashness of McGary, the precipitate crossing of the fatal ford, the unequal struggle, the desperate heroism of the pioneers and the sickening slaughter of the flower of Kentucky's soldiery, constitute one of the most familiar and interesting episodes of Western history; but the part played in it by the principal actor, Girty, has for some reason been substantially ignored by the writers who have treated the event during the entire century that has elapsed since its occurrence. The borderers of 1782, exasperated at Estill's defeat, inflamed by the burning of Crawford and lashed into a fury of mortification and grief over this last and great disaster, were in no mood to admit the ability of the man they hated and despised as a renegade. The disaster was charged entirely to the recklessness of the hot-headed McGary and the odious Girty was treated with silent contempt. The example thus set seems to have been followed by all the Western chroniclers since that day. But viewing now the cold facts with eyes undimmed by either prejudice or

passion, it becomes evident that the soldiership of Girty had more to do with the defeat of the gallant pioneers than the rashness of McGary, which dramatic incident has not gone unchallenged from the fact that Boone makes no mention of it whatever in his letter to the Governor of Virginia, written only a few days after the battle. The man who led on, entrapped, outgeneraled and overwhelmed such able and wary leaders as Boone, Todd and Harlin may be scorned as a renegade but not as a military chieftain. It does but little honor to the memory of the brave who battled at the Blue Licks to assert that they were beaten by a creature who had neither character nor brains.

How great was the alarm of the settlers, even after Girty had retired beyond the Ohio, may be inferred from the above-mentioned letter of Boone, in which he urges the Governor of Virginia to send troops to aid in the defense of Fayette County, in which the two greatly exposed stations, Bryant's and Lexington, were located. He declares: "If the Indians bring another campaign into our country this fall, it will break up these settlements." Girty was now by far the most prominent and influential leader among the Ohio Indians, and was dreaming of still greater military achievements, when fortunately for the distressed and weakened pioneers his career as a soldier was checked for a while by the close of the War of Independence, but not before he had, according to Bradford, made a narrow escape from the swiftly-moving forces of George Rogers Clarke, "the Napoleon of the West," who pursued him to the valley of the Miami. The autumn, so dreaded by Boone, instead of bringing Indians, brought the glad tidings of the cessation of hostilities, an event which crushed all the hopes of the savages of ever recovering Kentucky—hopes which seemed just after their great victory at the Blue Licks to be on the very verge of a glorious realization. Girty learned with disgust of the return of peace while at the head of an Indian force operating about Fort Pitt, and the news, strange to say, was first made known to him by the salutes of rejoicing fired from the very fort that he had shamelessly abandoned, and whose downfall he had so confidently predicted.

The great struggle in which the savages had been so actively engaged was now over, and Girty, resigning for a season the ambitions of military life, betook himself again to his old desultory occupations of trader, hunter and interpreter. It was during the, to him, monotonous calm of the first year after the war, 1783, that he secured a white wife by marrying Catharine Malotte, a young lady about half as old as himself, and reputed to have been at that time the beauty of Detroit. There is an air of romance even about his marriage. His wife, like himself, had been a victim of a

border tragedy and a prisoner among the Indians. A party of settlers, including her own family, while descending the Ohio in a flat-boat, seeking new homes in the wilds of Kentucky, were fired into by a band of Shawanese, who seized the boat, killed several of the party, and carried into a miserable captivity all the survivors, including the then young girl, Catharine Malotte. She was released through the interposition of Girty. Gratitude paved the way for love, and when her deliverer returned from the war as the victor of the Blue Licks, she turned away from her red-coated and more civilized admirers of the British post, and accepted their strange and notorious white savage confederate. About two years after his marriage, 1785, Girty did an act of kindness, as singular as it was unexpected, and the motive for which has never been clearly explained. According to Colonel Thomas Marshall, he posted his brother, James Girty, who was himself a thorough savage, on the northern bank of the Ohio, near the mouth of the Kanawha, to warn immigrants traveling by boat of the danger of being decoyed ashore by the Indians. McClung says that this timely notice was of service to many families, and that those who did not heed it suffered. It is asserted that Girty did this to curry favor with the Americans, and to help pave the way for his return to the people he had abandoned, but nothing has been produced to support this opinion. His conduct otherwise did not indicate it. The Indians at this time, and for years after, were constantly aggravated by the encroachments of the whites upon their North-western lands, and certainly Girty did his best to fan the increasing flame, which finally resulted in Harmar's campaign of 1790. The very name of the White Indian seemed an omen of evil to the pioneers, for it was at "Girty's Town," now St. Mary's, Ohio, that Hardin was defeated in this same campaign.

Hostilities between the Americans and Indians continued, and, Girty's services being in demand, he was once more in his element. In February, 1791, at the head of a large force of savages, he attacked and besieged Dunlap's Station on the Great Miami, but he failed as he did at Bryant's, after trying by every device of skill and terror to induce the brave and determined garrison to surrender. It was at this place that Abner Hunt met his death, but exactly how will probably never be known. O. M. Spencer, who was captured by the Indians about this time, and while he was yet a child, says in his *Captivity*, that Hunt was burned and tortured to death by Girty's Indians. Judge Burnet, in his well-known and valuable *Notes*, makes no mention whatever of the burning, but says: "Mr. Hunt was killed before he could reach the fort." Spencer is remarkable for his exuberant imagination. He pictures Girty as a regular Ital-

ian assassin of the Borgia period, with the regular stage "make-up," scowl and all, but unfortunately betrays himself by giving Girty a flat nose. He evidently dressed up his character to suit the popular demand. George and James Girty were as completely identified with the Indians all this time as if they had been actually born savages. They lived with them, fought with them, and apparently wanted no other society, and did all they could to make Indians out of the white children they frequently captured. They participated in the attack on Dunlap's Station, and each took an Indian's part in the struggle then in progress.

Simon Girty figured in the terrible defeat of the brave but unfortunate St. Clair, November 4, 1791, and was evidently a personage of some importance, but owing to the fact that the Indian side of the story of these early and bloody days is not recorded, the part he took is not clear. He is said to have received a saber-cut in this battle, but Spencer, who saw no bravery in him, and who calls him "a murderous renegado and villain of diabolic invention," says that "he was informed," while he was a badly scared child captive, "that the wound was made by the celebrated Brandt while he and Girty were engaged in a drunken frolic." That Girty could get as drunk as a lord and display all the brute that was in him when he was drunk there is no manner of doubt, but his daring character and his contempt for danger are sufficiently established to refute the imputation of cowardice. It is said that on one occasion, while engaged in a violent quarrel with a Shawanese, the Indian questioned his courage. Savage-like Girty sought satisfaction at once, and got it. Securing a keg of powder he instantly knocked it in the head, snatched a blazing fagot from the camp fire, and then, in the presence of a crowd of dusky spectators, called on the Shawanese to stand by him while he waved the sparkling torch above the powder. But the taunting Indian decamped amid the derisive laughter and yells of the Indians.

An incident which is thought to have occurred shortly after St. Clair's defeat, and which is given on British authority, indicates that Girty shared the feelings of his tribe against the horrible practice of burning prisoners. Several captives who had been taken during the recent battle, by some of the Indian allies, were condemned to the stake, and, in spite of every influence that Girty could bring to bear, the fatal fires were kindled to the delight of the assembled multitude of drunken braves, screeching squaws and capering children of all ages. Among the prisoners was an American officer, in whose behalf Girty especially exerted himself, but without effect. Finally, when his doom seemed inevitable, Girty, who was always fertile in expedients, seized a favorable moment when unobserved and dropped him

a significant hint. The officer, very fortunately, instantly comprehended it, and, as he was being taken to the stake, he suddenly snatched a papoose from the arms of a squaw and threw it toward the flames where another prisoner was burning. The wildest excitement instantly ensued ; men, women and children fell over each other in the simultaneous rush that was made to save the baby. The child was rescued, but, in the midst of the frantic and indescribable confusion, the officer made good his escape. To his credit be it said, that he never forgot his deliverer, and, as will be seen further on, did his best to prove his gratitude in 1812 when the fortunes of war brought trouble to Girty.

During the years 1792-3, when the Federal Government through commissioners was seeking to establish a permanent peace with the Northwestern tribes, Girty was conspicuous as the adviser and interpreter of the Indians. He counseled them with all the earnestness of a natural-born savage to resist every effort of the Americans to acquire their lands north of the Ohio, and his voice seems to have been as potent with them as ever. In fact, he is said to have been the only man with a white skin allowed to be present at the most important private consultations of the red men. Girty and his Wyandots were found arrayed against the Americans in the campaign of 1794, and they took part in the desperate attack on Fort Recovery on the 30th of June, and were present at the battle of Fallen Timber on the 20th of the following August, when old Mad Anthony Wayne visited such a crushing defeat upon the brave but fated savages. Girty was now getting on in years, and when the treaty of Greenville, in the summer of 1795, closed the old Indian wars of the West and brought his hunting-grounds and his adopted kinsmen under the authority of the people he had fought so long and hated so cordially, the battle-scarred warrior, disappointed, disgusted and furious, abandoned forever his old home on the St. Mary's and followed the retiring British to Detroit. He was there in July, 1796, when the English gave up to the United States this the last of the military posts they held in the North-west, and the advancing troops of Wayne felt sure that now at last the daring and notorious White Indian would fall into their clutches. But the wily old fox scented the danger just in time, and desperately determined to risk the chance of drowning to capture by his enemies, he boldly plunged his horse into the Detroit River as the soldiers came in sight, fought his way successfully through the sweeping current to the Canada shore, and there, with the water streaming from his clothing but still seated firmly upon his panting horse, he shook his fist at his baffled pursuers and poured out upon them and the United States Government a torrent of the wildest and most savage curses.



--and threw it toward the flames--

Driven at last from American soil, Girty found a refuge at Fort Malden, a post which had been established by the British on the east side of Detroit River, on the Canadian frontier just before the evacuation of Detroit, and distant only fifteen miles from that stockaded village so famous in the annals of Indian warfare. Fort Malden commanded the entrance to Detroit River and from its walls the red-coated sentinel could look for many a mile up the stream which separated him from the territory of the new Republic, and turning, view the beautiful waters of Lake Erie spreading out before him as far as the eye could reach. The ground once occupied by this defense is now the property of Hon. John McLeod, ex-member of the Canadian Parliament. A platform of elevated earth cast up in the long ago by the veterans of George III., and the stump of the flag-staff that once surmounted it, are now the only remains of the fort from whence issued the invading forces which brought death and disaster to the American soldiers of the war of 1812. The very name "Malden" has almost disappeared from the maps, and its successor, "Amherstburg," now designates the picturesque spot in the County of Essex, Upper Canada, where once the royal stronghold stood. But the Malden of 1796 which Girty sought, though but an outpost of the wilderness frontier, was busy enough just then, surrounded as it was by hundreds of hungry refugee Indians from the war-desolated North-west, who were clamoring for aid and comfort from their British employers. Here he found many warriors of his own tribe preparing to settle on lands granted them as allies of the crown, and here safely ensconced were Elliott and McKee, his corrupters of Fort Pitt and his boon companions for twenty years. They had found it convenient to be among the earliest arrivals. These educated white mercenaries grew rich from the fruits of their treason, while the illiterate Girty, Indian-like, waxed poorer and poorer. It was well said lately to the writer by a scholarly correspondent who owns original papers bearing upon the Girty case, that "Girty was terribly punished for his conduct, whilst men who deserved it more escaped almost unscathed." As this society (about Malden), Indians, refugees and British, was the most home-like Girty could expect to find, the soil fertile, the region sufficiently wild and abounding with game and no war promising immediate excitement, he settled with his family on a piece of land at the head of Lake Erie and about a mile and a half below Malden, the same now owned by W. C. Mickle. Following on with other fugitives came James Girty, the most degraded, blood-thirsty and uncivilized member of the family, a thorough Indian in feelings, manners and life. Caring for no society but that of his fellow-savages, he settled with his Shawnee squaw, his dogs and his wild young children, on Middle Sister

Island, not far from his brother. After his settlement at Malden, Simon Girty resumed the occupation of interpreter, and was much among the Indians who constantly visited the fort and camped upon his land. But the monotony of peace, which accorded so little with a nature that was fiery, untamed and adventurous to the last, pushed him to extremes for relief. Sometimes he sought excitement in the rum he loved so much and which was dealt out so freely at the fort, and then he was an Indian indeed, and would tear around on horseback flourishing an Indian war club, singing Indian war songs, and filling the air with the terrible sounds of the scalp halloo. Sometimes his recreation would be a long hunt with a party of savage kindred, and again it would be some dangerous expedition. Tradition reckons with this last his celebrated trip to Pennsylvania in 1811, when in disguise he risked his life to see once more his relatives and old haunts at Squirrel Hill, east of Pittsburgh, where his brother Thomas and half-brother John Turner lived and died respected. John Turner, who seems to have always been loyal and affectionate to the notorious and hated Simon, is known as "the benefactor of Squirrel Hill," from the fact that he donated a burying-ground to the citizens of that locality at his death, which occurred in 1840, after he had attained the advanced age of eighty-five. All sorts of wonderful and improbable tales are told of this bold appearance of Simon in the very midst of his enemies. One of the wildest recounts an attack that was made upon him while he was concealed at Turner's house, and the statement is made that he then received a saber-cut in the head which ultimately caused his death. Unfortunately for this thrilling tale the saber-cut dated back to St. Clair's defeat. He was convinced however that he was still cordially detested, and especially at that time when the hostile movement of the Wabash Indians caused the savage horrors of the past to be so vividly recalled. His presence was detected and vengeance was threatened, but he escaped, and returning home found all Upper Canada in excited commotion over the rapidly approaching war between the United States and England and the certain invasion of the province.

War was proclaimed on the 19th of June, 1812, to the delight of the savage beneficiaries of Great Britain, who had for weeks been gathering in swarms about Fort Malden, and the very name of that post soon became to the Americans the synonym for defeat and death. Girty was an old man when the war commenced, but not too old to encourage a band of Wyandots to rally around Tecumseh and the British standard. After the lapse of many years the aged victor of the Blue Licks, and the remnant of his broken people, were again united against their ancient and inveterate North-western foes. But the health of Girty was shattered, and he was so

nearly blind that he could lead no more his dusky hosts to battle, but he dimly saw the flash of the guns which announced the shameful surrender of Hull; stood once again within the stockaded walls of Detroit, to which he had been so long a stranger, and heard the exultant shouts of his lessening tribe as it returned from the bloody massacre of Raisin, a deed which inspired every Kentucky soldier with the feelings of an avenger, revived bitter memories of the Indian tragedies of the past, and with them the name of Girty, which was mentioned again with threats and curses. And fate as usual was against him. The tide of war turned, the British fleet was destroyed, Malden was captured, and Girty became a fugitive. But one at least of the soldiers who pursued the retreating forces of Proctor wished the White Indian no evil. It was the American officer whose life he had saved by suggesting the desperate expedient of casting the Indian papoose toward the flames. A British authority asserts that, though this officer had retired from the American army, he rejoined it in 1813 with the express purpose of doing his best to protect Girty in the event of his capture. It was an exhibition of that rarest of noble qualities, gratitude, which makes one think better of his race. But the ill-starred Girty, from whom happiness always stood afar off, was denied the pleasure of ever knowing that he had a single friend among the advancing Americans. They never met. With pain and difficulty Girty followed the retreating British and Indians until the 5th of October, 1813, when Harrison virtually closed the struggle in the North-west by his victory at the Thames. And here also, according to the veracious Campbell, was ended the checkered career of the notorious White Indian. Campbell says: "It was the constant wish of Girty that he might breathe his last in battle. So it happened. He was at Proctor's defeat on the Thames, and was cut to pieces by Colonel Johnson's mounted men. Nearly three-quarters of a century have elapsed since the battle of the Thames occurred, and though in that long period books and pamphlets without number on Western history and the War of 1812 have been published, still, strange to say, in spite of all this investigation, this statement of Judge Campbell was the nearest approach that writers made to the actual truth concerning Girty's death, and was, with one very late exception (Mr. Butterfield) received by all as authentic history. Simon Girty was not only not killed in the battle of the Thames, but he was prevented by blindness and rheumatism from taking any part whatever in the engagement. His brother James, however, followed the brave Tecumseh that day into the thickest of the fight, his younger brother George is said to have died about this time, and it was during this war that Simon lost his

son Thomas, from sickness occasioned by over-exertion in gallantly carrying a wounded officer from the field of battle, and it is possible that the error so long perpetuated about the death of Simon may have arisen from a confusion of these events, all of which involved the Girty name. The collapse of the British army at the Thames found Simon Girty homeless and a wanderer, but, moved by the same instinct of savage brotherhood which ever characterized him, he sought and found a refuge at a village of the Mohawks on Grand River. This village, which was located in the midst of some of the finest land in the Dominion, and on probably the most picturesque of Canadian streams, was settled at the close of the American Revolution, under the leadership of Girty's Indian friend and comrade, the distinguished Brandt. It is a singular coincidence that Campbell, the celebrated poet, should have made a mistake about Brandt so similar to the one made by another and more obscure Campbell about Girty. In *Gertrude of Wyoming*, "the monster Brandt" is mentioned as a participant in that cold-blooded massacre, of which Thomas Campbell so touchingly sung, though the fact is established that he was not present on that tragic occasion.

Girty shared the whiskey and venison of his Indian friends until the close of the war in 1815, when he returned to his solitary farm near Malden. It was solitary indeed. His two daughters were married, and in homes of their own; the son of his heart had died during the war; and his wife, worn out by his wild and irregular life and Indian-like ways, had left him long ago. Only one of his family, his son Prideaux, lingered about him. To add to his gloomy reflections, his savage brother James was nearing the grave. Shunned by white people, and deserted even by his Indian squaw, the miserable creature lingered on through months of pain, and at last was found dead on the beach of Middle Sister Island, on the 15th of April, 1817. The final shadows were gathering thick and fast about the aged victor of the Blue Licks also. Blind, rheumatic, and shattered in health, the terrible Canadian winter succeeding his brother's death told with fatal effect upon him. He declined rapidly, but showed no concern whatever about his condition, and bore his sufferings with the proverbial stoicism and fortitude of his adopted race. During the bitter weather prevailing but few bothered themselves about the now desolate and sinking recluse. The remnant of his old tribe, however, did not entirely forget him in his extremity, and occasionally a solitary Wyandot, as seamed and scarred and grizzled as himself, would come to his bedside suddenly and unannounced, take the thin hand of his dying brother "Katepacomen," and with tender grasp, but impassive countenance, greet him in the familiar tongue of his

dusky people. Girty died in the month of February, 1818; his troubled and tempestuous life fitly ended in the midst of a driving snow storm. He had paid no attention to religion as understood by white men, and if he died in any faith at all it was in that of the Indian—a simple trust in the power and the goodness of the Great Spirit. He was buried near Amherstburg (Malden) on his farm, now known as the W. C. Mickle place, while the snow was so deep that his body had to be carried over the fences. His grave can still be pointed out, though it is entirely unmarked, and so utterly neglected that a common farm gate swings over the spot. And so ended the unhappy life of a creature who became by the force of warping circumstances the anomaly of early Western history.

No estimate of Girty can be either correct or just which does not take into account the influence which captivity and savage training had upon his character. How powerful it was is shown by the significant facts that it not only effaced the natural antipathy for the destroyers of his parents, but so perverted his normal instinct of race that he was never again in full sympathy with his own people, while, as far as known, he was always true to the Indians, and retained their confidence and friendship to the end of his days. The early settlers knowing that he was a white man by birth, but ignorant of his captivity and its effects, very naturally hated and despised him as a renegade. The term, however, does not apply to him in its infamous sense as it applies to Elliott and McKee, who had nothing whatever in common with the Indians, while Girty was one of them in almost everything but complexion. He was more of a savage than a renegade; more of a Brandt than an Elliott, and took part in the forays and outrages against the whites, not with the cowardice and mean malice of an outcast, but as a leader of his adopted people, and with the bravery and open hatred of an Indian. He was substantially an Indian; was neither better nor worse than an Indian, and should in the main be judged as such.

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